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CHANGING SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF WOMEN IN AFRICA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

SUMMARY

The Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies, adopted in 1985, made concrete recommendations as to which policy and programme measures are needed to promote women's self-reliance and full integration in the development effort. The document (Forward-Looking Strategies) which outlines the strategies is therefore intended to provide a blueprint for action to advance the status of women in national and international economic, social, cultural and legal development to the year 2000 and it stresses the full participation and integration of women in all areas of development.

Since its adoption, there has been significant progress achieved by the organizations of the United Nations system and Governments of the Africa region to implement the strategies. Action taken has included strengthening their respective focal points and machineries for the advancement of women. However, a greater effort has to be made to involve such focal points and machineries more fully in the promotion, monitoring and implementation of the strategies.

This report reviews efforts that have been made since the World Conference as they relate to the changing socio-economic conditions of women in Africa. In this respect, various areas as they relate to the socio-economic conditions of women in Africa have been considered. They include agriculture, employment, education and training, law and legislation, health and nutrition, water and sanitation and drought and desertification. Obstacles hampering the implementation of the strategies for the advancement of women have been pointed out.

Despite historical obstacles and other factors hampering the implementation process, it is noticeable that significant changes have occurred for instance with respect to women in the formal sector, the public and civil service and the professions. Considerable progress has also been made in improving female access to educational opportunities through an increase in the female share in total enrolment at the primary, secondary and university levels. This progress, however, must essentially be seen as a means of the attainment of higher goals, namely the extent to which improvement in educational opportunity leads to improved opportunities in the labour force.

In short, it is noted that though commendable, most of the efforts made towards changing the socio-economic conditions of women in Africa fall short of the required resources, structural and policy changes that could ensure a more effective way towards the changing socio-economic conditions of women in Africa.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Action to promote equality between men and women, to ensure the full integration of women in the total development effort and to increase women's contribution in the strengthening of world peace on the international scene began in earnest when the General Assembly, in its resolution 3010 (XXVII), proclaimed 1975 International Women's Year. Then came the World Plan of Action for the implementation of the objectives of the International Women's Year, 1/ adopted by the World Conference of the International Women's Year at Mexico City in 1975 and was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 3520 (XXX). In that resolution, the General Assembly proclaimed 1976-1985 the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace.

2. The Copenhagen World Conference in 1980 adopted the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace 2/ which further elaborated on the existing obstacles and on the existing international consensus on measures to be taken for the advancement of women.

3. Towards the end of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (1976-1985), it became clear that expected achievements of goals and objectives set had not been attained as envisaged. To that effect, strategies had to be formulated to ensure that the implementation of goals and objectives set go beyond the Decade 1986 to 2000 hence the Arusha and Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies.

4. The Arusha Strategies for the Advancement of Women in Africa beyond the End of the United Nations Decade for Women adopted by the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, held in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania from 8 to 12 October 1984, incorporates most of the Strategies for the Advancement of Women adopted by the World Conference in July 1985 in Nairobi, Kenya.

5. The Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women during the period 1986 to the year 2000 present concrete measures to overcome the obstacles to the Decade's goals and objectives for the advancement of women. The Nairobi ForwardLooking Strategies document therefore serves as a conclusion to the Decade and a contribution towards enlarging the perspective for the future of women and more important provide a framework for renewed commitment by governments and the international community to the advancement of women.

6. The Forward-Looking Strategies are a challenge as they reflect a greater awareness of the ways in which global issues affect women's life and call for an increased commitment on the part of member States as well as the international community.

7. In light of the above, the General Assembly endorsed in its resolution 40/108 of 13 December 1985 the Strategies and requested the Secretary-General and the specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations system to

establish where they did not already exist, focal points on women's issues in all sectors of the work of the organizations of the United Nations system. 3/ Moreover, by its resolution 1987/18 of 26 May 1987, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General, in further developing and implementing the reporting system for monitoring and review and appraisal of progress in the advancement of women, to take into account a number of guidelines, two of which recommended that United Nations focal points should be strengthened, and that regular inter-agency meetings should be held to promote co-ordination of review and appraisal among organizations of the United Nations system.

8. The primary objective of the present report is therefore to review what has happened since the Nairobi World Conference within the context of the Forward-Looking Strategies. The report reviews measures African Governments and United Nations bodies and agencies have taken to translate the Strategies into concrete action as far as the African region is concerned and the impact these measures have had on the socio-economic conditions of women in Africa.

9. The recommendations embedded in the Forward-Looking Strategies document are addressed primarily to Member States of the United Nations, international institutions and non-governmental organizations. A look at what the United Nations bodies and its specialized agencies have done to implement the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies will shed light on what has happened since 1985 within the United Nations system.

10. As mentioned earlier the development of such focal points as well as the reporting procedures within the organizations of the United Nations system can be seen as an initial and essential step in translating the Strategies into action, as they provide the structure for their implementation.

11. Similar measures have been taken by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) as a follow-up to the Nairobi World Conference and pursuant to the implementation of the Strategies. For its part, the African Training and Research Centre for Women, as the ECA central focal point, drew up guidelines for incorporating a woman's component in each Division of the secretariat. The guidelines were immediately translated into action as eight ECA divisions subsequently designated focal points to ensure this concern for women's issues. This has enabled the Centre to monitor progress in the plans and programmes of ECA. However, financial constraints have hindered the efforts of the regional commissions to sufficiently strengthen many focal point units, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 40/105 of 13 December 1985, entitled "Incorporation of the interests of women in the work programmes of the regional commissions". Despite this difficulty, several permanent posts have been made available to the Centre thus ensuring the continuation of the women's programme.

12. Several specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system have indicated recent initiatives taken to strengthen their respective focal points on women's issues. To mention a few, for example, the Office for Women Workers' Questions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) is currently preparing a plan of action to guide ILO's activities for women workers, and the Office has sought to improve co-ordination at the regional

level by designating ILO focal points for women in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe especially to promote technical co-operation projects for women workers at the national level. The Office has taken measures both to integrate the Strategies into the ILO Medium-Term Plan, 1990-1995 and the ILO programme budget, 1988-1989 and to monitor the implementation of the strategies aimed at assisting women workers in the area of standard-setting, research and technical co-operation.

13. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) established in April 1987 the Division for Women in Development within the UNDP Bureau for Programme, Policy and Evaluation. Among other objectives, the Division seeks to co-operate with the operational units of UNDP in order to ensure a substantially larger role for women, both as participants and beneficiaries, in all UNDP programmes and projects. Furthermore, at its thirty-fourth session, the UNDP Governing Council adopted resolution 87/15 of 18 June 1987, entitled "Women in development", by which it, inter alia, stressed the need for close co-operation by the UNDP Division for Women in Development with the relevant units of the United Nations organizations and agencies, including the secretariat of the Commission on the Status of Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) as well as governments and non-governmental organizations. 4/

14. The World Bank, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other United Nations programmes and funds have taken similar measures to establish women in development divisions and/or to strengthen their existing respective focal points for the advancement of women.

15. Non-governmental organizations have played a great role in publicizing and helping to implement the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies. Their activities have included, among others, holding conferences and meetings at local, national and international levels to bring women's issues to the public's attention; identifying priority problems and seeking solutions; assisting in the collection of data, in research, and in the production of community guidebooks for action and training manuals.

16. These measures as stated above are positive indications of the seriousness the various bodies of the United Nations system have taken to implement the Strategies. The established women in development divisions as well as the focal points for the advancement of women have played and will continue to play a crucial role in implementing and monitoring the Strategies.

II. THE FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES AND THE ROLE OF NATIONAL, SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL MACHINERIES IN THE AFRICAN REGION

17. The preceding pages have provided information on measures taken by the various bodies of the United Nations system and its specialized agencies to translate the Forward-Looking Strategies into concrete actions. This part of the paper will review the role of national, subregional and regional machineries in the implementation of the Arusha and Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies.

18. The African Regional Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women, held in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania in 1984 adopted the Arusha Strategies for the Advancement of Women in Africa beyond the United Nations Decade for Women. The Arusha Strategies recommended, among others, that in view of the pivotal role which such machineries could play in the enhancement of women's positions and opportunities, it was imperative that these bodies be placed in strategic locations where they can monitor national trends, seize all relevant occasions to advance women's interest and work to implement the Strategies. 5/

19. National machineries should set realistic targets based on a genuine appraisal of women's priorities at grassroots level and such machineries should work in collaboration with judicial systems to initiate legislative changes in areas where discrimination still exists in legislation and practices, to review customary laws, particularly those on marriage, and to undertake campaigns to inform women of their rights.

A. At the national level

20. Along with the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies, initiatives through the national machineries and/or structures have been taken to sensitize governments and non-governmental bodies on the Strategies. Workshops and seminars organized by national machineries have been held in many African countries to familiarize governments, non-governmental bodies, women's groups and institutions with the Strategies and to prioritize them in relation to national plans and resources.

21. In Zimbabwe, for instance, a Plan of Action for the implementation of the Strategies (following the World Conference of 1985) was drawn up and endorsed by heads of the Zimbabwe Government and parastatals. 6/ The Government has then embarked on a programme of decentralization, the objective being to involve the participation of people at village level in planning and decision-making. Planning units have been established from the village level upwards to provincial level where women are involved at all levels. This will ensure that their needs and concerns are incorporated into the national plans.

22. In the United Republic of Tanzania, arrangements are underway to prepare a national policy on women which will identify comprehensive national development priorities and programmes on the integration of women in development in future plans.

23. The National Commission in Malawi, which is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Community Services, has a co-ordinating and catalyst role. Its objectives include, among others, promoting and assisting in the establishment of institutions which would formulate, implement and monitor women's programmes; co-ordinating women's programmes carried out by both government and non-governmental organizations; and promoting greater awareness among women especially in the rural areas, examining and evaluating contributions of women to various aspects of development in the light of the national needs and priorities.

24. The activities undertaken in the United Republic of Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Malawi and other countries in Africa, though information was not available at the time of this review, show the seriousness some member States have taken to translate the Arusha and the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies into concrete actions.

B. At the subregional level

25. In line with the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies concerning technical co-operation at international, interregional and regional levels, including co-operation among developing countries, an Indian Ocean Conference on the Role of Women in the Development of Small Island States was held in Mauritius in July 1986. Five countries participated: Madagascar, Seychelles, Comoros, Reunion and Mauritius. The conference recommended, among others, the setting up of a machinery to facilitate communications and the dissemination of information to women and about women as well as women's activities in the region.

26. Zimbabwe hosted in 1986 the SADCC Women's Conference which discussed the implementation of the Forward-Looking Strategies at subregional level. Plans for a machinery to co-ordinate women and development within SADCC are at an advanced stage.

27. Within ECA, the Subregional Committees on the Integration of Women in Development, within the framework of the existing Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs) based at Lusaka, Yaounde, Gisenyi, Niamey and Tangier, have spearheaded and promoted the activities of the subregions according to priority areas set forth by each subregion and in line with the Arusha and Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies.

28. During the 1986-1987 period, the activities of the West and Central African subregions focused on the role of women in the distribution of foodstuffs, training and research activities in agriculture, food and appropriate food technologies and marketing of processed food. In East and Southern Africa, within the same period, attention was given to health issues such as water and sanitation, development and management of small-scale enterprises and strengthening the technical capabilities of national machineries, while North Africa and the Great Lakes countries were concerned with the legal status of women, strengthening national machineries for women in development as well as techniques in project planning, implementation and evaluation.

29. Within the subregion, National Technical Co-operation Assessment and Programmes (NATCAPs) and Round Table Conferences have been conducted. NATCAPs aim at identifying higher priority technical co-operation programmes and projects as well as at assessing and specifying constraints and priorities for meeting development and human resources capabilities.

C. At the regional level

30. The Africa Regional Co-ordinating Committee for the integration of women in development (ARCC), established to promote the participation of women in development, assess the changing conditions of women and set standards and establish legal models, has continued to play a major role in women's programmes.

31. Since its inception and within the context of the Arusha and Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies, ARCC has vigorously pursued the goals of integrating women in the mainstream of economic, social and political activities by harmonizing and co-ordinating the subregional programmes on women in development; mobilizing resources for the implementation of programmes agreed at the regional and subregional level; monitoring the programmes on behalf of African women, and has enabled African women to participate in the decision-making process at national, subregional and regional levels.

32. In view of the above, it is clear that some measures and programme activities have been undertaken through national, subregional and regional machineries or structures to implement the Forward-Looking Strategies. However, though measures have been undertaken and/or initiated, the main concern is whether these measures have an impact on the socio-economic conditions of women in Africa. To what extent can these initiatives account for the changing socio-economic conditions of women in Africa? To what extent has the situation of women changed since the 1985 World Conference?

33. In an attempt to answer the above questions and to address ourselves to the purpose of this report, it is necessary to understand what is meant by changing; secondly, to look at the economic trends and structural adjustment and their impact on the socio-economic conditions of women in Africa; and finally, to review some indicators to show whether the situation of women in Africa is improving or getting worse.

34. In the context of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies, changing may refer to the creation of conditions under which women can be involved in social and economic transformation on better terms. It also means concerted efforts to achieve reforms at every level and in every sound sector (education, law, economic reforms, employment, health, etc.).

III. ECONOMIC TRENDS IN AFRICA

35. According to the ILO paper, 7/ the economic situation in the region is the worst in recent history and standards of living are falling precipitously. Drought and abnormally low commodity prices are singled out as the most important causes of the disarray in the region. As a consequence, average per capita income in Africa has declined by about 10 per cent between 1980 and 1986.

36 Besides this decline in per capita income, Africa is faced with the debt situation whose servicing charges are creating tremendous strains on economic recovery programmes. Governments are under pressure to improve their balance-of-payments situation and to reduce their budget deficit within very short periods of time.

37. Given the current economic situation in Africa, several questions can be raised. What does this mean to the socio-economic situation of women in Africa? How does this affect the women economically? How can this be interpreted in relation to the changing socio-economic conditions of women in Africa?

38. It is well known that the current economic crisis in the region has had significant implications for social classes and social categories in terms of income. Women and men, especially among the poor, have and are suffering from dwindling or lowering real incomes and rising prices. Women, as members of society, have and are therefore greatly suffering from the economic crisis. However, the relevant questions here are whether women are suffering more than men, and why.

39. One aspect of the recent recession whose effects on women needs to be pointed out is budget retrenchment. This has been one of the main strategies pursued by governments during recession to reduce budget deficits. Budget retrenchment has generally meant a freeze in the salaries of public employees, a freeze on public employment and a reduction in public expenditures for social services. 8/ These measures have had greater effect on women than on men.

40. Another process that recession has speeded up and that affects women more than men at present, and will affect them in the future, is the application of new technologies in services. The recent introduction of micro-electronic technology replaces the routine secretarial work performed generally by women and is bound to reduce their employment. 9/ This effect is at present particularly evident in developed countries.

IV. STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN

41. Structural adjustment programmes in many African countries have focused on agricultural development, including agricultural research, extension services strategies, marketing and others. In respect of the participation of women in agricultural development, despite their acknowledged predominance in agriculture in many parts of the world and in Africa in particular, women continue to be left out of agricultural strategies. In Africa, 85 per cent of rural women are involved in agriculture, where they produce and process as much as 80 per cent of family food consumption. Reduction in male wage employment and increasing landlessness have led to increased dependence on women's earnings in poor rural households. Where successful structural adjustment requires improving the balance of payments with regard to agricultural exports and food imports, then women must be part of that strategy. There are clear linkages between structural adjustment objectives to increase food supply, the economic and technical roles of rural women, and the welfare of children.

42. To further review the changing socio-economic conditions of women in Africa in the context of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, the report will, to this end, give attention to the following areas: agriculture, employment, education and training, law and

legislation, health and nutrition, water and sanitation, drought and desertification. The paper will conclude by highlighting obstacles hampering the implementation process and achievements made since the World Conference.

V. AGRICULTURE

43. Women's participation in programmes and policies related to food, water and agriculture are covered as areas for specific action within the development section of the Forward-Looking Strategies document (paras. 174-188). Women play important roles in world-wide agricultural production, a situation which community or district level studies tend to reflect more accurately than do available data from national population censuses or labour-force surveys.

44. Statistics on women's labour-force participation in agriculture (based on national sources and/or estimates of the International Labour Organisation) in sub-Saharan Africa show an intensive participation of women in agriculture. In six countries (the Gambia, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, Lesotho, Malawi and Zaire), about half of the agricultural labour force are women, with well over half in Botswana, the United Republic of Tanzania, Cameroon and Sierra Leone. In another four countries (Ghana, Senegal, Togo and Burkina Faso), women comprise between 42 to 46 per cent of the agricultural labour force, and in the remaining countries, from 31 to 39 per cent. The only exceptions to this high participation pattern are countries with a predominantly Muslim population (e.g., Mauritania and the Niger). 10/

45. Furthermore, indepth community studies in sub-Saharan Africa reveal that African women play important roles in farming systems, as independent farmers (as well as often unpaid family workers) in both food and cash crops. A recent study on the participation of women in development, both as agents and beneficiaries undertaken in Ghana, showed that women are the main workers in agriculture and manufacturing, both of which qualify them to be pivots for Ghana's economy recovery. 11/ Ghanaian women also hold clear monopoly over both the retail and distributive trades of agricultural, marine, locally produced and imported products, thereby giving meaning and encouragement to those engaged in food and cash crop production, processing, manufacturing, importing and exporting.

46. According to the study, Ghanaian women can be said to be integrated into the development of Ghana more as workers and very little as beneficiaries. Women feature prominently in food production, food processing and small-scale manufacturing.

47. In line with the Forward-Looking Strategies, governments have embarked on measures to improve and increase the role of women in agriculture. Zimbabwe, the United Republic of Tanzania, Kenya, Malawi, Guinea, Mali, the Niger and Senegal, to mention a few, are among the countries that have taken measures to improve the role and participation of women in agriculture. In the Niger, several projects have been undertaken to enhance the role of women in agriculture. They include the development of off-season crops and the intensification of the role of women in food production, preserving and marketing and the setting up of advanced technical training centres to offer women the same training in agriculture as men.

48. In Zimbabwe, the Government has taken steps to abolish the discriminatory pricing structures of crops that existed in favour of the commercial farmers; marketing and transport infrastructure has been improved. 12/ Extension services have been extended to cover women actively involved in agricultural work. They are being encouraged to form farmer groups to make the delivery of these services easier.

49. Credit facilities in Zimbabwe have also been expanded to include women who in the past were not considered eligible for credit. For example, the Agricultural Finance Corporation, the major source of long- and short-term agricultural credit, increased facilities to the rural areas from Z$1,6 million to 4,348 farmers in 1979 to Z$49.2 million to 88,000 farmers in 1984. As most of the rural farmers are women, these figures indicate that women's credit facilities have improved. Women can now own marketing board cards in their own right, thus they can be directly renumerated for their agricultural production.

50. The percentage of women engaged in subsistence agriculture in the United Republic of Tanzania is greater than that of men and food crop production still remains a woman's domain. Land ownership is still vested in the male members of the family. 13/ To improve the input/output ratio, efforts are geared towards provision of farm implements, fertilizers, high-quality seeds and agricultural extension officers are being made available to demonstrate and educate farmers on modern methods in order to ensure higher agricultural productivity.

51. In order to improve women's participation in agriculture, the following programmes are at various stages of consideration and implementation by the Tanzania Government: appropriate labour and time-saving devices to be provided to cater for all agricultural activities such as ploughing, weeding, harvesting, transporting, preserving and processing of agricultural products; appropriate food processing technologies that are relevant to be made widely available to rural women, along with storage and marketing facilities to reduce post-harvest losses; and Folk Development Colleges and other training institutions to have facilities to accommodate women's special needs such as creches, etc., and selection of intake should adopt a quota system to ensure female enrolment. 14/

52. In Guinea on the agricultural front, financial and agricultural assistance from FAO has led to the popularization of improved seed varieties, thus promoting an increase in productivity per unit of surface area. 15/

53. The case of Zimbabwe, the United Republic of Tanzania, the Niger and Guinea are an indication that some governments are increasingly taking measures to implement the Forward-Looking Strategies in this sector and have also recognized the significant role women play in agriculture and food production.

VI. EMPLOYMENT

54. Since the beginning of the United Nations Decade for Women in 1975, it has been recognized that a qualitative change has taken place in the participation of women in employment and social perceptions regarding their

economic contribution. The growing number of women now comprises an important and stable part of the world's work force. To appreciate the employment situation of women in Africa, it is necessary to distinguish three major sectors for employment in the region, namely the formal, the informal, and industry.

A. Formal employment

55. Available information regarding women's employment in most African countries indicates that there is no policy discrimination between men and women in wage employment, and that labour laws provide for equal pay for equal work and for equal treatment between men and women. 15/ However, in most countries men still dominate wage employment. Specific efforts aimed at improving women's access to and their status in wage employment have been slow. Overall, women are still concentrated in the low status and low-paying services sectors such as teaching, nursing, social work and secretarial jobs.

56. A recent global statistical survey (1950-2000) on Women in Economic Activity undertaken by ILO and the United Nations Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), 17/ showed that in almost all African countries, more and more women were employed in the services sector in countries for which data was available. The proportion of women has more than tripled in some countries and doubled in others. For example, the percentage of working women in this sector rose from 3 to 8.3 per cent in Senegal, 7 to 13.6 per cent in Cote d'Ivoire, 19.8 to 30.5 per cent in Nigeria and 31.6 to 51.9 per cent in Mauritius. In Morocco, despite a sharp increase in absolute figures, the proportion declined, from 48.8 to 36.4 per cent.

57. In most African countries except 10, including Ethiopia, Mali and Mozambique, the proportion of women in the total services sector labour force is greater than in the industrial sector. In some 20 countries, the proportion is also greater than in the agricultural sector. The table provides a summary of the data on occupational groups for women in selected countries in Africa.

58. As the figures in chart E clearly indicate, the highest percentage of the female labour force is occupied in agriculture, and the lowest in administrative and managerial functions. In the professional and related workers category, women in Africa register a relatively lower rate, reflecting the first stages of industrialization and inadequate facilities for specialization and training.

59. Women's participation in decision-making at top level is still unsatisfactory in most African countries. Up to now a few countries have involved some women in responsible positions such as ministers, advisors, top government civil servants and high-placed government and parastatal officials; even then the critical mass does not exist.

60. While there has been some progress in setting targets for the employment of women and some evidence of improvement in their recruitment and promotion in a number of the organizations within the United Nations system, the governing bodies of most of the organizations have not yet established five-year targets as set by the General Assembly. Only the United Nations General Assembly and the World Health Assembly have set 30 per cent targets. Even then, the percentage of African women in the United Nations system is very, very low compared to that of men.

Table 1

Distribution of economically active women by type of occupation in selected African countries (in !000 and in %)

Country (year)		Total economically active women	Distribution by type of occupation: Prof. technical and related workers (1)	Admin. and managerial workers (2)	Clerical & related workers (3)	Sales workers (4)	Service workers (5)	Agricultural animal hubs. & forest workers (6)	Production related workers (7-9)	Others*
Cameroon	No.	1 329.0	11.9	0.2	9.7	31.5	11.1	1 177.4	32.9	54.3
(1982)	%	100.0	0.9	-	0.7	2.4	0.8	88.6	2.5	4.1
Mali	No.	384.9	6.2	0.1	3.2	20.4	6.1	281.5	46.9	30.5
(1976)	%	100.0	1.6	-	0.8	2.7	1.6	73.2	12.2	7.9
Seychelles	No.	9.6	1.0	0.1	0.7	0.5	4.8	1.2	0.9	0.4
(1977)	%	100.0	10.4	1.0	7.3	5.2	50.0	12.5	9.5	4.2
Tunisia	No.	363.5	-	5.7	-	0.6	36.1	113.0	152.7	21.6
(1980)	%	100.0	-	1.6	-	0.2	9.9	31.1	42.0	5.9
Egypt	No.	857.8	281.7	16.8	195.9	31.8	54.5	61.0	52.0	164.1
(1980)	%	100.0	32.8	2.0	22.8	3.7	6.4	7.1	6.1	19.1

Note: * Others include workers not classified by any occupation
Source: ILO: Year Book of Labour Statistics, (General), 1982, 1983 Table 2B.

58. As the figures in Chart E below clearly indicate, the highest percentages of the female labour force is occupied in agriculture, and the lowest in administrative and managerial functions. In the category of professional and related workers, women in Africa register a relatively lower rate reflecting the first stages of industrialization and inadequate facilities for specialization and training.

AFRICA (CHART E)
Active female population by occupational groups
(Percentages)

Prof. techn. and related workers	Admin. and manag. workers	Clerical, sales and service workers	Agri. animal husby. and forestry workers	Production and related workers	Others
11.4	1.5	24.4	42.5	14.4	8.2

Note: The percentages are arithmetic averages of sample countries
Source: ILO: Year Book of Labour Statistics, 1981-83, table 2B

61. In summary, judging from the statistics and information presented in the preceding pages, there is evidence that the employment situation of women in the formal services sector has gradually increased since the Women's Decade. African Governments have acknowledged the importance of women's liberation in the whole process of socio-economic development, hence the need for equal opportunities for women for economic recovery.

B. The informal sector

62. The informal sector plays a key role in the employment situation in most African countries, particularly in the urban centres. At a time when the employment situation in the formal sector has more or less stagnated, employment in the informal sector has grown considerably. Women are better represented there partly because jobs in this sector do not require certification.

63. Although reliable statistics on the participants in this sector hardly exist because they are not often recorded in official statistics, according to various estimates in the West African countries, women constitute between 60 and 80 per cent of the total labour force.

64. Women in the informal sector constitute a very heterogenous group. There are those who engage in trade in agricultural produce such as vegetables, while others market imported as well as locally manufactured goods.

65. Women in the informal sector work under the most trying conditions, without basic services such as potable water and sanitation or health facilities; most have no skills or training and no secure access to production resources.

66. Several resolutions and reports have called, inter alia, for action to improve upon the conditions of work for women in the informal sector, not only with respect to increasing their access to improved technologies, storage facilities, credit and other productive resources but also making their work environment and welfare more human. The Forward-Looking Strategies have stressed, among other strategies, that governments should assist the increasing number of working women in the informal sector and economy (see also the Arusha Strategies). Furthermore, the Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference in Dakar in October 1985 adopted several recommendations on the African employment situation including women's work in the informal sector. It observed that women had poor work environments and lacked governmental investment and support and, therefore, proposed both national and international action to ameliorate their working conditions in the informal sector.

67. Ongoing improvement programmes for women in the informal sector have been initiated. An ILO report on a study on work welfare and environment of women workers in the informal sector in the cities of Banjul (the Gambia) Freetown (Sierra Leone) and Monrovia (Liberia) 18/ indicates that in 1984 the World Bank initiated a five-year financed project. Its emphasis is, inter alia, on the reconstruction of physical facilities which could inevitably lead to some improvement in the work environment and welfare of women traders.

68. It should be perceived that enhancing the productive capacity of this sector as well as improving its working conditions could simultaneously improve the living standards of women in the sector and also the larger number of urban workers and the poor who consume the goods and services generated by the sector.

69. Recognition of the importance of the role of women in the informal sector assumes a greater significance at this time of economic recession. In the urban areas, faced with the combined pressures of rising prices, falling wages and high male unemployment rates, more women are entering into informal sector income-generating activities.

70. In general, it is perceived that there has been a great increase of women engaged in the informal sector due to the current economic recession and to the fact that far-reaching transformations in economic structure increasingly leave women to carry the burden of satisfying the full spectrum of the family's basic survival needs. Under the circumstances, the socio-economic conditions of women in Africa in this sector have and continue to change for the better but the work environment remains worse.

C. Industry

71. In almost all African countries the industrial sector has offered relatively few opportunities for women, especially during the period 1950-1970. In 1950, it accounted for less than 1 per cent. Only in two countries, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Tunisia, the total female labour force employed in the industrial sector was over 40 per cent. Mali and Burkina Faso employed about 72 per cent of women in this sector, showing higher rates for women than men. 19/

72. In Guinea-Bissau, women account for 6.5 per cent of the total number and are mainly found in the processing industries. 20/

73. Women's participation in industrial employment in Africa has slightly increased mainly in areas such as food processing, textiles and garment-making activities. Due to an increasing number of women migrating into the cities, many are being employed in the newly implanted industries, particularly textiles, clothing and pharmaceuticals. The growth of the newly implanted industries has been due to a large extent to the availability of abundant, cheap female labour. Women have in a way contributed a great deal to the industrial take-off in Africa. Besides their participation in industrial employment, women have also benefitted from industrialization, mainly indirectly, as members of households with male employees in these types of employment.

74. Despite this slow progress, women's participation in the industrial sector, including small-scale industries, is equally low; therefore the inequitable distribution of resources among sexes.

75. Judging from the data given above, it could be said that the situation of women in employment is gradually changing.

76. In the services sector, the change is positive in most African countries. Women have increased their participation in professional occupations, even though the change in the share of women professionals is small as compared to men professionals. In the informal sector, in the majority of the African countries, women have and continue to play an important role especially during this period of economic recession. At present women's role in the informal goods producing sector, both urban and rural, is considerable in most African countries. They are contributing significantly to the household income, although the roles of women and men are frequently complementary according to various social and cultural settings.

77. Despite the significant role played by women in this sector, conditions of work in the informal sector are usually hard and earnings often meagre. The supply of better technology, physical facilities and resources may be the best means of alleviating the plight of women.

VII. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

78. Education and training are among the major factors that promote national development and thus bring about positive change in the lives of the population.

79. Though many countries have made determined efforts to increase enrolment at the primary level as witnessed by their development plans and the fact that education at primary level is free in a number of countries, girls are still a long way from matching male enrolment figures and drop-out rates for them are still higher for various reasons.

80. At secondary and tertiary levels where males dominate, the enrolment of girls is also quite low even though there has been an increase of girls enrolment since independence. For instance, the number of girls attending secondary school in Malawi increased by 1,041 in the 1979/1980 school session. 21/ However, there is still a tendancy of more drop-outs on the side of girls at primary and secondary school levels.

81. According to the various country reports presented at the fifth meeting of the Subregional Committee on the Integration of Women in Development (Lusaka MULPOC, February 1987), in the area of formal education, Zimbabwe reported having achieved equal enrolment of boys and girls at primary school and an increase in the proportion of girls at secondary school level. 22/ Efforts have been intensified to improve the career guidance delivery system so that young girls can enter into the previously male-dominated areas.

82. In the United Republic of Tanzania, there has been an increase in the number of girls at secondary school level which is at present recorded at 37 per cent at ordinary level and 29 per cent at advanced level. 23/ At the university level, women's enrolment rose from 9.7 per cent in 1977 to 25 per cent by 1984. Teacher training institutions have also observed higher rates of women.

83. In Kenya, the 8-4-4 programme of education which was started in 1984 has one notable feature, that is all school children are encouraged to take all the subjects provided in the curriculum which has been widened irrespective

of sex. There has been a rise in the total enrolment of females. In 1984, for example, out of 4.38 million children attending primary schools, 2.1 million were girls. At the university, the increase in female enrolment has been more modest than at the other levels, rising from 15 per cent in 1973 to about 23 per cent in 1984. 24/

84. In Benin, the educational reform attaches special importance to the schooling of young girls. In this connection, a joint UNESCO/UNFPA project on "Education and its relevance to family life" is underway in schools. 25/

85. With respect to non-formal education, women's participation is much greater than that of men. In Zimbabwe, it is estimated that in 1986 about 80,000 people were enrolled in literacy classes and of these 80 per cent were women. In the literacy evaluation exercise carried out in 1985 (Zimbabwe), of the 30,000 who took the test 21,700 passed, 85 per cent of which were women. The Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe has now integrated these new literates in its overall training programmes but with a bias to functional literacy such as bookkeeping, project management, etc.

86. Literacy classes too have observed a higher number of women in the United Republic of Tanzania with an 85 per cent literacy rate, which is among the highest in Africa.

87. The women's programmes in Kenya, Zimbabwe and in other countries of Africa, especially after the United Nations Women's Decade, have included a cross-section of socio-economic activities geared towards the development of the community and the nation. Since most of the rural women are either illiterate or semi-illiterate, non-formal education has played a significant role to widen their skills and ability to use new knowledge and techniques so vital to the development process. Non-formal education should enable women to assume new roles and expose them to greater contact with the social, economic and political life of their respective countries which, in turn, may lead to the development of new ideas, values and attitudes to development. Hence, non-formal education programmes for rural and urban women must not be planned in isolation, but must be linked to the overall national development efforts.

88. Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia instituted a campaign in 1985 for the "Arabization" of school life, which also aimed to relate education more closely to the activities of local life and emphasized the provision of better opportunities for girls. 26/

89. In the area of science and technology, women are least represented. The enrolment of girls in science subjects at secondary and university level and in technical colleges is still very low. This was also noted at the first African scientists meeting to establish an African Union of Science and Technology convened by OAU in co-operation with UNESCO, UNDP and the Congolese Government and held in Brazzaville, the Congo in June 1987. The meeting advocated a greater role for women in the development of science and technology in Africa. Similarly, the Kilimanjaro Declaration adopted at the second Conference of Ministers Responsible for the Application of Science and Technology to Development in Africa (CASTAFRICA II) in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania in July 1987, called for the training of researchers, engineers and technicians with special emphasis on women.

90. The low representation of women in science and technology has hampered their contribution in the productive sectors such as agriculture and industry. In this case, women's productivity is still low. As part of human resources development, strategies aimed at increasing women and girls for entry into scientific and technical fields should be developed. In the urban areas, where high technologies are being introduced, awareness should be created and appropriate training planned for women. This will enable women to plan their careers in a more progressive manner and guidance and counselling programmes should be introduced.

91. The rapid expansion in the education system has, to some extent, placed greater demand for the enrolment of girls in schools, both at all levels of the education system and within the non-formal education programmes. This in return has increased the number of educated women and girls and hence their participation in the various employment services has also increased to some degree, although it is too early to measure the impact this has had on the socio-economic conditions of women in Africa.

VIII. LAW AND LEGISLATION

92. Recommendations related to legal rights, the need for new legislation and the achievement of legal equity between men and women appear throughout the Forward-Looking Strategies document. Since the World Conference (Nairobi 1985), African Governments have continued to redress legal disabilities that hamper women's participation in national development. For instance, the Zimbabwe Government introduced the Labour Relations Act 1985 which embraces the provisions of the equal pay regulations, the minimum wages act and the maternity leave regulations of 1980; the Matrimonial Causes Act 1985 which recognizes, for the first time in the history of Zimbabwe, the direct and indirect contribution of a woman to family wealth. 27/

93. Legal committees have been established by several African Governments to study areas such as legislation laws and traditions, customary laws and traditions which affect the progress and development of women, regulations and administrative instruction that affect women, and legal aid for women. In many countries, it has been observed that most women in Africa have neither the knowledge of law nor the ability to appeal to the law when it comes to their rights.

94. This has necessitated in some countries (like the United Republic of Tanzania, Mauritius and Malawi) the establishment of legal aid committees which offer legal advice to women. Through these legal aid committees, information is disseminated to inform women of their rights and to encourage them to participate more actively in the affairs of the country, to project the positive image of women as partners in development and to help women in general to understand their rights.

95. A family law advisory and educational programme has also been established in Nigeria to help people understand their rights and to help resolve family situations. The programme has two parts: a family law centre that advises on legal rights and makes referrals to attorneys if litigation ensues, and

an enlightenment programme that uses mass media to inform about family issues available to the public. The Ghana Law Reform Commission on new family laws, enacted during 1986, aims at promoting a uniform system of marriage in the country, irrespective of traditional or ethnic groupings. Among those measures taken in Cameroon are included the creation of legal conditions conducive to the progress of women by eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and by guaranteeing them equal opportunities in the political, economic, social and cultural sectors. 28/

96. A total of 28 African countries have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women while others among the 28 have signed and ratified the Convention. In line with the Convention, Mauritius for example has taken action by setting up a Sex Discrimination Committee to make an inventory of all sex discriminatory laws, practices and regulations as well as to study the provisions of the Convention in order to advise on the legislation that need to be enacted or amended to give effect thereto. 29/

97. Although the law offers equal rights to men and women in many countries of Africa, there still exist provisions which are not in the interest of women and in this regard makes it difficult for the women to play their economic role effectively. In addition, some laws do not in fact essentially protect women's rights because of the perpetuation of customary laws which encourage men's archaic views on the family.

98. The programme of legal reforms is a continuous process which is constantly monitored against the readiness of the community to accept these changes. Since legal rights cut across all areas of national development such as employment, education, health, food and agriculture, population and marriage, African Governments would need to give more attention to the rights of women and promote research to identify existing laws which tend to hamper women's participation in national development. What is required is a concerted effort to achieve reforms at every level and in every sound sector.

IX. HEALTH AND NUTRITION

99. The health situation in developing Africa is characterized by unacceptably high maternal and infant mortality rates. This was also noted by the International Safe Motherhood Conference that half a million maternal deaths take place every year, 99 per cent of which occur in the developing world. 30/ The question of women's health is one that is intricately linked to the role and status of women in the community and to the level of socio-cultural and economic development of the society.

100. In Africa, as in most developing regions, women's health has been given cursory attention, with emphasis on women's reproductive roles and with insufficient attention being given to other health needs of women.

101. The lack of recognition of women's productive roles and their contribution to economic development influences policies governing health delivery systems. This is evidenced by the lack of attention given to women's health issues in agricultural, industrial and household work.

102. Taking into consideration the gap created by the lack of a comprehensive health policy geared to women in their productive and reproductive roles, tremendous inputs need to be exerted to eradicate deeply rooted traditional practices that are detrimental to women's health and to bring about changes in values and attitudes that undermine the role, status and contribution of women so that their quality of life could be altered significantly in order to have an impact on society at large.

103. Despite the above fundamental factors which continue to perpetuate the poor health situation of women and children in Africa, during the United Nations Decade for Women and thereafter, African governments have made significant strides in implementing programmes in areas such as immunization, primary health care (PHC), maternal child health (MCH) and family planning programmes, all of which are of particular relevance to the health of women. The particular health problems of Women have been given considerable attention. In the United Republic of Tanzania for instance, the maternal, child health and family planning programmes have greatly improved the services of family health and the extent of participation of women. There are also programmes to improve the nutritional status of the community, in particular for children under 5 years old and lactating mothers.

104. Along with the efforts and programmes being initiated by African Governments, United Nations bodies and other agencies have designed programmes aimed at improving health. At its thirty-sixth session (1986) the WHO Regional Committee for Africa reported that all countries of the African region have resolved to have a three-year scenario of health development with special emphasis on action programmes targeted to primary health care activities at district level emphasizing community participation. 31/

105. This district approach, with integration of health and related activities at the local level, facilitates linkages between health and economic development. Health personnel constitute (in economic terms) the productive labour force. Women play a dominant role in the labour force at the local level (district, community, village, etc.) and are the most and worst affected group in terms of health (maternal mortality and fertility rates, etc.). The participation of women in the implementation of these health activities such as health care which is provided by women is significant. It is through the active participation of women in health programmes that their socio-economic conditions can be improved.

106. With respect to food and nutrition in relation to health, the WHO programme has been concerned with promoting activities to increase women's income, productivity, and the accessibility of women to adequate dietary information; to reverse negative social and cultural activities affecting women's dietary patterns etc. National programmes are currently being supported in Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, the Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania. 32/

107. Since the commencemnt of its operations, the World Food Programme has brought significant benefits to women through targeted supplementary feeding programmes and employment and improved economic and social infrastructure resulting from food-for-work schemes. The proportion of women in the food-for-work labour force has ranged between 30 and 50 per cent in many

countries and reached 90 per cent in a few cases. 33/ Attention to their economic conditions and requirements would greatly assist the programming and delivery of food aid support to those most in need, in addition to improving their capacity for self-reliance.

WATER AND SANITATION

108. Many villages in rural areas in Africa have no clean and safe water near their residence. African Governments are aware of the workload of the rural women and children who continue to walk long distances everyday to fetch water. To provide every community with clean and safe water, the Tanzanian Government for instance adopted a 20-year programme (1971-1991) with the aim of providing potable clean water to all by 1991. This programme has further been reinforced by the launching of the Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (1981-1991) by the United Nations.

109. WHO, along with other United Nations agencies participating in the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (IDWSSD) is collaborating in efforts to increase community water supply and sanitation through increased recognition of the roles of women and directed promotion of women's participation in IDWSSD activities at national, regional and international levels.

XI. WOMEN AT THE DECISION-MAKING LEVEL AND LEGISLATION

110. Political participation is a key issue for women because it is an indicator of their status as well as a tool to improve their condition in society. In many African countries, women have the right to vote and they do vote. However, the mere act of voting cannot be regarded as a measure of political consciousness or participation. In many instances, poor rural and urban women are mobilized by political parties to vote. In such a situation, women vote in high numbers but they do not participate in any other political activity. Although a few women in some African countries are now actively involved in politics, their situation in political participation is still unsatisfactory. The only significant change is their political awareness. It should be noted however that in some countries such as Benin and Senegal, politically, women are represented on various organs right from the grass-roots to the top levels. Owing to their representation on these organs in the case of Benin, women take part in all decision-making concerning the country. In Senegal, women participate in all levels of decision-making: governmental, parliamentary, diplomatic and community. 34/

111. In high public offices, the situation of women has not changed though a few have been appointed as ministers and mostly assigned to social services sectors such as education, culture, social welfare, women and youth affairs. In the judiciary, the majority of women are at the lower levels. In the case of Kenya, the President appointed women to head various parastatals within the Government after the Nairobi Conference.

112. There are many reasons for limited employment of women particularly at the decision- or policy- making level, the main one being the past lack of education and training opportunities. Secondly is that of chauvenistic tendencies and sexual discrimination practised by some employers with negative attitudes towards working mothers.

113. Factors affecting women's participation in politics include: resources, time, skill, experience, patronage contacts and information. Women are at a disadvantage with regard to all of these factors that promote success in politics.

XII. DROUGHT AND DESERTIFICATION

114. Drought and desertification have been Africa's greatest environmental problems, afflicting one or more countries on the continent for over two decades and severely damaging not only the physical environment but also social and economic conditions. 35/ The severest spell of drought was during the period 1982-1985, when as many as 24 African countries, ranging from the sub-humid Sudan-Guinean zone in West Africa to the dry savannah of East and Southern Africa were so badly affected that they required emergency food aid at one time or another.

115. In the Sahelian belt for example, cereal production in 1987 declined about 17 per cent in relation to last year in the nine Sahelian countries members of the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) - Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, the Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Senegal. 35/

116. The situation has and continues to affect women as food producers. In the fight against drought and desertification and to achieve food self-sufficiency, the people and especially the women of Mali, under the guidance of the party and Government have played an important role in the protection of the environment through the widespread use of improved stoves and re-afforestation. Similar activities are being undertaken in the Niger, Senegal, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. In the Niger for instance, projects for the control of desertification by creating the sense of responsibility in women at all levels (large-scale re-afforestation programmes, the setting-up of a technical unit for improved stoves entrusted to AFN, re-claiming of farm-land, etc.) have been undertaken. 36/

117. Measures to control drought and desertification in Africa at the national, subregional and regional levels have been included in AFPER and subsequently endorsed in UN-PAAERD. The involvement of women and incorporation of their concerns into these measures should be considered in order to improve their situation in productive sectors such as agriculture.

XIII. OBSTACLES

118. Historical obstacles and serious current challenges such as the economic recession in the region has and continues to hamper the implementation process of the Arusha and Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. Fundamental factors, among others, include:

(a) Financial constraints both at the national and international level. At the national level, for instance, most governments are not able to adequately budget and support women's programmes. Most women's

programmes at national, subregional or regional levels have been initiated with donor support. Governments ought to give high priority to women's issues in the allocation of resources;

(b) Information and data on the contribution of women in socio-economic development and their status in society is lacking. Consequently, women's concerns in the development process has been overlooked by development planners. Information and data bank is a prerequisite for adequate development, planning and programming. Hence an improved system nation-wide of collection and dissemination of information on women in the region should be developed. This should aim at gathering and disseminating information, ideas, technologies and statistics related to women and which will provide a channel for co-operative activities among women and monitor the status of women in the region;

(c) Lack of and inadequate technology and education on the part of women at the higher level increase to limit women's participation in activities at the decision- making level. The limited technical skills and capabilities among women have also partly led to women's inequitable access to opportunities and hence their ineffective participation in the development process and in the productive sectors, such as industry;

(d) Weaknesses of machineries at national, subregional and regional level. These structures are crucial to act as pressure groups for ensuring and influencing national policies, plans and programmes as well as promoting the implementation of national, regional and international strategies for the advancement of women. Effective structures are needed to monitor the changing socio- economic conditions of women in the context of the Arusha and Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies.

XIV. CONCLUSION

119. Despite historical obstacles and other factors as mentioned above hampering the implementatioin of the Nairobi Forward- Looking Strategies, some achievements have been made since the World Conference.

120. In the employment sector, it is noticeable that significant changes have occurred with respect to women in the formal sector, the public and civil services and the professions.

121. Considerable progress has been made in improving female access to educational opportunities. This progress is seen not only in increasing in the female share in total enrolment at the primary and secondary levels but also in the increases in female participation rates. This progress, however, must essentially be seen as a means of the attainment of higher goals, namely the extent to which improvement in educational opportunity leads to improved opportunities in the labour market. The rate of participation of women in the labour force is therefore, a decisive indicator of the extent to which women are being integrated in mainstream activities.

122. In the areas of health, nutrition, water and sanitation, there have been increased efforts following the World Conference to strengthen the maternal child health (MCH), Primary Health Care (PHC), family planning (FP) programmes, immunization programmes, provision of food aids and of food-for-work programmes as well as programmes designed to bring water within women's reach.

123. National, subregional and regional machineries have increased awareness and sensitivity on gender issues among women themselves, government officials, planners and decision- makers. These structures have played crucial roles in promoting, co-ordinating and monitoring programmes for the integration of women in development.

124. Numerous seminars, workshops, symposiums and conferences held during the last two years at national, subregional and regional level have not only provided skills and knowledge but have contributed to the increased awareness and sensitivity on gender issues among women and government officials.

125. For its part, the ECA African Training and Research Centre for Women (ATRCW) has undertaken research studies, conducted workshops and seminars pertaining to women in development and has provided advisory services aimed at strengthening national machineries. Access to credit and banking facilities has been promoted by the Wolrd Women's Banking (WWB) Africa Region which by 1987 had no less than 15 legally registered affiliates in the region.

126. In conclusion and in line with what has been presented in this report, it is worth noting that some progress has been made since the World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985. However, paucity of data has made it difficult to present specific and concrete information on the changing socio-economic conditions of women in Africa in the context of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.

Footnotes

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